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1/24/02

Mick Hans

01/24/02 08:27 AM

To: Jeff Kelley/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Phillippa
Cannon/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Elissa Speizman/R5/USEPA/US@EPA,
Mary Fulghum/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, FREDRICK
MICKE/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, VERNETA SIMON/R5/USEPA/US@EPA,
Padmavati Klejwa/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Larry
Jensen/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Mike Joyce/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Linda
Nachowicz/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, RICHARD
KARL/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Stuart Hill/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Denise
Battaglia/R5/USEPA/US@EPA
cc: Thomas Skinner/R5/USEPA/US@EPA
Subject: LL in 1-24 Tribune

Here's the story. P. 5 of the Metro section. Could be some follow up calls from other media today.

Toxic matter still untouched at lakefront park site

Julie Deardorff, Tribune staff reporter

01/24/2002 Chicago Tribune North Sports Final ; N Page 5 (Copyright 2002 by the Chicago Tribune)

Two years after radioactive thorium was discovered in a 3-acre patch where the Chicago River meets Lake Michigan, the extent of the contamination still isn't known, members of the Grant Park Advisory Council said Wednesday.

DuSable Park, a hard-luck little meadow, cannot be developed into a park until the thorium contamination is resolved. For park advocates, the DuSable League, community organizations and some in the Streeterville neighborhood, the wait has been unacceptably long.

"Years (later) we're sitting here with a pile of radioactive soil on a visible lakefront park that could be honoring DuSable, said Bob O'Neil, president of the Grant Park Advisory Council. "This isn't debatable."

Streeterville resident Barbara Puechler spoke on the history of thorium contamination in the area at a meeting of the advisory council Wednesday.

The Chicago River Rowing & Paddling Center proposed making the site--if it is ever deemed suitable for development-- a river center that would improve public access to the waterway.

In December 2000, the Environmental Protection Agency surveyed the area as part of a general investigation into the Streeterville area where several sites had already been contaminated with thorium. The source is most likely the Lindsay Light Co., which used thorium in the manufacture of lantern mantles from 1910 to 1936.


The EPA sent the results showing possible contamination to Kerr- McGee, River East LLC, the former site owner's corporate successor, and the Chicago Park District, the current site owner.

Kerr-McGee and EPA have been working together since last summer to determine the extent of the contamination, said Fred Micke, on-scene coordinator in the EPA 's Superfund Division. Kerr

McGee submitted its latest draft work plan on Nov. 12, according to the EPA .

"We know there's some radioactive material out there, but we don't know how much we have and at what depth," said Micke. "But the site is secure." In December the Friends of the Park asked the EPA for help, but the agency said it does not have authority to dictate the timetable for park development.

----- Forwarded by Mick Hans/R5/USEPA/US on 01/24/02 08:28 AM -----

 **Mick Hans**
01/23/02 05:26 PM

To: Thomas Skinner/R5/USEPA/US@EPA
cc: Jeff Kelley/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Phillippa
Cannon/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Elissa Speizman/R5/USEPA/US@EPA,
Mary Fulghum/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, FREDRICK
MICKE/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, VERNETA SIMON/R5/USEPA/US@EPA,
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Nachowicz/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, RICHARD
KARL/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Stuart Hill/R5/USEPA/US@EPA, Denise
Battaglia/R5/USEPA/US@EPA
Subject: FYI. Tribune re: Lindsay Light

FYI, we expect a Chicago Tribune (Julie Deardorff) story on 1-24 or 1-25 concerning a possible thorium cleanup at the DuSable Park/Lindsay Light site on the lakefront near North Pier.

This story has been covered in recent months by Skyline, North Loop News, and in a pretty fair and lengthy "Neighborhood News" feature in the Reader. The reporter spoke briefly to both me and OSC Fred Micke today and we sent her some background material, including the Reader story.

This particular call was prompted by a 1-23 Grant Park Advisory Council meeting, which will include a presentation by SOAR, a Streeterville community group that's been critical of EPA at times. A number of community groups are impatient with the Park District, and to a slightly lesser degree with EPA, because negotiations with PRP Kerr-McGee on the scope of sampling at the site are moving slowly. The community groups want a new park ASAP. The Park District has been moving slow on action at the site for years and now point to EPA for delaying things. EPA wants the PRP to pay for more extensive sampling to get a better handle on how much contamination is there and what sort of remedy is appropriate. Our position is that if they want to develop the park, now is the time to address any contamination issues. Hopefully, all of this will be resolved soon and analysis/cleanup will resume in the spring.

As of 5pm, the reporter was angling to get another day on the story so she could talk to some members of the site team on Thursday after attending the community meeting on Wednesday night. If we have that luxury, I'll work with the site team on this tomorrow.

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science days, 12, a former student at Whitney Young High School, works on a mural to promote healing, unity and peace after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. More than 50 young artists from the Chicago area are painting the work, on canvas paneling, which will be presented to New York City in a ceremony next month.

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By Julie Deardorff

Tribune staff reporter

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